

Psychological adjustment of children with ambiguous genitalia (disorder of sex development) and their parents

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A sample of 26 patients with ambiguous genitalia who had their first surgical intervention more than 5 years before were recruited. The children were assessed to find out the degree to which the appearance is upsetting, how it is related to negative evaluation of self, the degree to which it leads to avoidance; and their parents were assessed for the presence of grief and its stage. Results showed that the surgical condition was upsetting in 38.5% n (10). It lead to negative evaluation of self in 23.1% (and avoidance in 38.5% n ; as for parents, It was found that 15.4 % suffered denial; 53.8% suffered depressive mood whereas 30.8% suffered depressive behavior. Guilt was absent whereas anxiety was present in all parents. Risk factors for psychological maladjustment in both children and their parents included female sex, longer duration of illness, repeated surgeries, severe hypospadias, more residual problem or cosmetic defect. Presence of more depressive or anxiety symptoms in parents was positively correlated to upset and negative view of self in the child. It is thus concluded that outcome of surgery for ambiguous genitalia extends far beyond postoperative, functional and local cosmetic complications and that psychological outcome and patient satisfaction have long been overlooked and that proper follow up and management of those patients should include psychological care for the children and their parents over a long period of time that may extend into adolescence.